

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS WITHOUT MARKINGS

IN THE DRAWING:

Figs. 1, 2 have been amended.

REMARKS

The last Office Action of December 9, 2008 has been carefully considered. Reconsideration of the instant application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 14 to 26 are pending in the application. Claims 14 and 23 have been amended. Claim 14 now includes subject matter previously recited in claims 18 and 24. Claims 18, 24 and 26 have been canceled. No claims have been added. An amendment to the specification has been made.

No art has been applied against claims 15 and 16, which are therefore presumed to be patentable over the art of record.

OBJECTION TO THE DRAWING

The drawings are objected to under 37 C.F.R. §1.83(a) for failure to show every feature of the invention specified in the claims.

Applicant has made amendments to the Figs. 1, 2 to show the cylinder that operates the actuating apparatus, as claimed in claim 23, with reference symbol "8". No new matter has been introduced. A new drawing sheet, labeled "Replacement Sheet" is submitted herewith. The specification has been amended to make it consistent with the changes to the drawings.

Withdrawal of the objection to the drawing is thus respectfully requested.

CLAIM REJECTIONS - 35 U.S.C. §112, FIRST PARAGRAPH

Claims 15, 16, and 26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement, because the specification allegedly fails to specifically point out how the "center axis" is defined.

The rejection of claim 26 has become moot by canceling the claim.

The rejection of claims 15 and 16 is respectfully traversed, because paragraph [0036] clearly describes "25" as the "center axis" of hitch socket "2",

which is also clearly shown in FIGS. 11 and 12.

Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph is thus respectfully requested.

CLAIM REJECTIONS - 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 14, 17-19, 24, and 25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Hall (U.S. 6,588,790).

The rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) is respectfully traversed in view of the amendments to independent claim 14 and the following remarks.

Claim 14, as amended herein, recites a high-load drawbar eye with a hitch flange for attachment to a towed vehicle, and a hitch socket constructed to receive a matching hitch ball and having an open rim and defining a center axis. The hitch socket is substantially hemispherical in shape and defines a greatest diameter. A substantially semicircular collar is formed along the open rim with a diameter that is smaller than a greatest diameter of the hitch socket, with the collar further including two end sections, each end section having a recess formed therein. A hitch arm having a longitudinal axis connects the hitch socket to the hitch flange. The drawbar eye also includes a hold-down device which is movably attached to the hitch arm for movement along the longitudinal axis and includes a semicircular fork engaging with the hitch socket. The semicircular fork has two end sections, each end section having a projection formed thereon, with each projection interlocking with a corresponding opposing recess in the semicircular collar when the hitch ball is in engagement with the hitch socket.

Hall discloses a trailer coupling with an automatic locking mechanism to secure the trailer to a towing vehicle ball. Coupler system 10 includes an automatic locking means 46 which generally includes a retractable latching plate 48 in communication with a spring assembly 50. Plate 48 is spring biased such that plate 48 generally cooperates with socket 36 to couple or trap ball hitch 24 in socket 36. After ball hitch 24 passes plate 48, plate 48 spring assembly 50 pushes out such that plate 48 cooperates with socket 36 to hold ball hitch 24 in socket 36.

(col. 6, lines 29–34). As clearly seen in FIGS. 2 and 4 of Hall, Hall fails to show that the two end section on the collar have recesses formed therein, and that the two end sections of the semicircular fork have projections formed thereon, with each projection interlocking with a corresponding opposing recess in the semicircular collar when the hitch ball is in engagement with the hitch socket. The claimed interlocking feature is clearly shown in FIGS. 1 through 12 of the instant application (see, for example, FIG. 9 showing the open position and FIG. 10 showing the interlocked closed position) and described in paragraph [0035] as providing a sufficiently negative support load to be jointly received by the collar 21 and the hold-down device 5.

Applicant submits that Hall fails to disclose the projection and interlocking recess in the fork and collar, respectively, so that amended claim 14 is not anticipated by Hall. The added feature in claim 14 was substantially recited in original claim 18, which has been canceled.

For the reasons set forth above, it is applicant's contention that Hall neither teaches nor suggests the features of the present invention, as recited in claim 14.

As for the rejection of the retained dependent claims, these claims depend on claim 14, share its presumably allowable features, and therefore it is respectfully submitted that these claims should also be allowed.

Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) is thus respectfully requested.

CLAIM REJECTIONS - 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 20-22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hall in view of Kitterman (U.S. 2,326,466).

Claim 23 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hall.

Claims 20-23 depend from claim 14 and therefore contain all the limitations thereof, patentably distinguishes over the applied prior art in the same manner as claim

14.

Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is thus respectfully requested.

CITED REFERENCES

Applicant has also carefully scrutinized the further cited prior art and finds it without any relevance to the claims on file. It is thus felt that no specific discussion thereof is necessary.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above presented remarks and amendments, it is respectfully submitted that all claims on file should be considered patentably differentiated over the art and should be allowed.

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner consider necessary or desirable any formal changes anywhere in the specification, claims and/or drawing, then it is respectfully requested that such changes be made by Examiner's Amendment, if the Examiner feels this would facilitate passage of the case to issuance. If the Examiner feels that it might be helpful in advancing this case by calling the undersigned, applicant would greatly appreciate such a telephone interview.

Respectfully submitted,

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